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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001036

SIPDIS

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AF FOR A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE NATSIOS  
NSC FOR PITTMAN SHORTLEY  
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TAGS: PGOV PREL SOCI KPKO UN AU SU

SUBJECT: DARFUR SAGE EXPOUNDS ON SOME UNCOMFORTABLE GROUND  
TRUTH

REF: KHARTOUM 00987

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Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) CDA caught up with Al-Fasher University Professor Abduljabbar Abdullah Fadul, probably the single most knowledgeable Darfuri academic alive today, on June 28 right before his departure for London to participate in a panel on social science research methods on Darfur.

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DARFURIS GLOAT AT HARDLINER'S UNTIMELY END  
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¶2. (C) The professor noted that many of Darfur's citizens were muttering under their breath a Quranic saying, "God delays but doesn't ignore," as commentary on the recent death in a car crash of regime hardliner (and DPA negotiator) Dr. Magzoub al-Khalifa. He noted that such gloating is not unusual as moves that have enraged the GOS such as ICC indictments or US sanctions are very well received by the majority of Darfur's citizens who follow their news very closely on BBC Arabic and Radio Monte Carlo. Many saw Al-Khalifa's (much lamented in Khartoum) demise as payback for his role in the region's ongoing misery.

¶3. (C) A native son and political independent in his late 50s who eschews the limelight, belongs to no major tribe and has spent thirty years doing field research throughout Darfur on subjects such as land use, animal husbandry, tribal relations and social mores, Fadul recalls the day twenty years ago when a callow youth named Alex de Waal, now a leading Western expert on the region, first came to him when he was the province's director of animal wealth. When prompted, he notes that no Sudanese government official has ever consulted him on the reality in Darfur, "they are afraid of hearing the truth," he noted and adds that the GOS leadership, "with the possible exception of some in the intelligence service (NISS)," has no really clear idea of what is going on in Darfur outside garrison towns they control.

¶4. (C) For Abduljabbar (see refet1), the main problem in Darfur remains one of governance, or rather poor or non-existent governance, to which the twin issues of peace and security are intimately connected. "It is hard to conceive that the crisis in Darfur can be solved with the current Sudanese Government but I suppose anything is possible," adding that the severe degradation of the region's

physical environment is part of that poor governance. Twenty years ago there were regions which supported 13 types of native grasses where now there is only one, barely edible variety. Camel herding nomads "pursuing an economically obsolete way of life" expanded herds of camels and added sheep and goats to the mix that devastated the land. Yes, the rains had failed but it was the irresponsible hand of man that caused devastation as grazing areas that had sustained a thousand camels now faced 6,000 plus goats and sheep that finished the land off. He noted that camels in Darfur cost more than they are actually worth now. They were mostly used for transport and the pickup truck ended that use, a donkey is cheaper and less damaging to the environment but less socially prestigious than having camels.

¶ 15. (C) While he welcomes the much-anticipated Hybrid, he notes a potentially fatal flaw in the search to a political solution to the crisis: "all the armed parties or instigators contending for power and influence in Darfur, the GOS, almost all the rebels, both signatories and non-signatories and their patrons in Chad, Libya and Eritrea, all of them are criminals and liars." It is going to be hard to make something work with such a group. He cautioned that foreigners need to be careful about this and noted a recent booklet in Western infatuation with jailed Darfur rebel Suleiman Jammous (under house arrest in Kordofan and the subject of a flattering column in the Wall Street Journal) who formed good ties with Western NGOs but who is an intolerant and radical Islamist. Those that have a following are mostly bad men and those that are not, have no following noting the Darfuri adage "Umda Barro" (a mayor with no citizens or villagers) to describe the recently appointed Governor of West Darfur, "a gunman," and current Governor of North Darfur, "once a peanut merchant in the Al-Fasher market" as regime stooges. He did exempt exiled SLM "Chairman" Abdul Wahid Nur from some of his scorn, "he is popular in the camps" but noted that Nur is egotistical and

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unrealistic.

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NRA - DARFUR LOCAL CHAPTER  
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¶ 16. (C) A bitter critic of GOS policies, "especially the military regimes which have been the worst of our long line of bad governments," the professor also had some harsh words for some Western nostrums: the idea that "disarming the Janjaweed is any kind of solution is insane, they would be robbed and massacred by their enemies, especially the Zaghawa, who are natural born bandits." He noted that most males now in Darfur are heavily armed and getting more all the time. The problem is not the presence of arms per se but the absence of the rule of law deterring people from using weapons against their neighbors. This is something that the Hybrid if it is well armed and equipped can do. "You Americans are armed to the teeth in your country but no one raids their neighbor because you have police, courts and laws that work," that will be the long-term solution to Darfur.

¶ 17. (C) The professor also believes that the idea that hundreds of thousands of IDPs can or will return to their villages is a pipe dream. He noted that the population of Al-Fasher has now more than doubled with the addition of three massive IDP camps that are putting down roots and "most of those people aren't going anywhere." Much of rural life has been irretrievably destroyed by GOS military action, environmental degradation and neglect. This "forced urbanization" is the wave of the future and what the GOS did with the massacres of 2003-2005 was accelerate a process that was going to happen somehow anyway. He noted the small garrison town of Kabkabiyyah whose population is 10,000 surrounded "around its throat" by 50,000 IDPs.

¶ 18. (C) COMMENT: Westerners in the know describe an hour spent

with Abduljabbar as equal to a graduate course on Darfur's recent past and potential future. A believer that the Hybrid can at least stabilize the situation, Professor Fadul worries that this is a temporary measure which can only be the very beginning of Darfur's recovery. Serious investment in the troubled region in the form of development, infrastructure and human capital will be needed but should be coupled with the development of a serious Sudanese partner in the form of a government (at least locally) able to work with the international community for the benefit of all. The fact that the GOS doesn't consult with a local expert who, while scornful of the regime, is not unalterably opposed to them speaks volumes about the challenges to good governance in Darfur. END COMMENT.

¶9. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
FERNANDEZ